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ABSTRACT

Females, minorities, and older students are entering higher education at an increasing rate. The influx of these "nontraditional" students has led to quite different enrollment patterns, in which stopping out of college and part-time enrollment are common. Most students have objectives that are not synonymous with earning a baccalaureate degree within four years. Such factors suggest a need to redefine student "success." At Miami-Dade Community College (MDCC), a study was conducted using criteria of success based on student goals, possible outcomes, and academic standing. Six categories of student outcomes emerged, including three defined as "success": graduating, remaining enrolled in good academic standing, and leaving college in good standing. Using these criteria, the MDCC student success rate for full-time, first-time-in-college, degree-seeking students was 70% after four years, including 31% who graduated, 9% who were still enrolled, and 30% who left MDCC in good standing. The two-year success rate for this same group was only 13%, emphasizing the need to consider protracted attendance patterns when examining graduation as a component of success. A further grouping of student outcomes based on entry-level basic skills reveals that academically talented students were not necessarily "at risk" by beginning their enrollment at a community college. Their three-year success rate was 86%, including a 40% graduation rate. A limited follow-up of full-time degree seekers who left in good standing revealed that 14% of those located had enrolled in the state university system within one year of leaving MDCC. The study report includes a review of the literature on two-year college student attrition, retention, and success, and a 32-item bibliography. (AAC)

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STUDENT SUCCESS AT MIAMI-DADE COMMUNITY COLLEGE: ISSUES AND DATA

Research Report No. 86-22

June 1986

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OFFICE OF INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH

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Student Success at Miami-Dade Community College:
Issues and Data

Educational myths abound in the United States. Sixty percent of high school graduates will enroll in college (NIE, 1984), yet only 34 percent pursue an "academic" curriculum in high school (Parnell, 1984). Postsecondary education embraces an increasingly large segment of the public, yet the public image of the typical undergraduate remains locked in the stereotype of a middle class, full-time, academically able 19 year old pursuing a baccalaureate degree which "he" will complete within four years. This in spite of the fact that over half of undergraduates are women; one of six is a minority; two of five are over 25 years old; more than two of five are part-timers (NIE, 1984); and only 35-40% achieve a baccalaureate degree within four years (Jackley & Henderson, 1979; Ramist, 1981).

The Ubiquitous Community College: Presence or Pretense?

The community college contribution to higher education is substantial, but is most often acknowledged by quoting numbers and ignoring mission. We know that more than half of all entering freshmen begin their careers in a community, technical, or junior college (Parnell, 1984). During the 1980s, slightly over half of all students in formal postsecondary education will be in a community college (Cohen, 1985).

The enormous presence of community college education has preceded an understanding and acceptance of its diverse student body and several unique missions. In one of the earliest longitudinal studies of "dropouts" from higher education, Astin (1975) applied university oriented success criteria (e.g. attaining the baccalaureate degree within four years; completing four years of undergraduate work; remaining continuously enrolled for four years) to both community college and university students. In one portion of the study, he asks whether type of institution (e.g. two year college vs. four year college vs. university) makes a difference in non-success rate, with little regard for the different enrollment patterns found at two year colleges. Not surprisingly, he finds a non-success rate of almost 60% for two year colleges, a much higher rate than at public

universities. Even after controlling for factors which mitigate against success at certain institutions, he finds a lower success rate at two year colleges. Astin (1975) concludes that two year colleges have a negative effect on persistence, and that students minimize their chance of completing a baccalaureate degree when they begin at such institutions.

Ten years later, Cohen (1985) acknowledges the growth of community colleges while lamenting the dilution of their transfer function. He asserts that the proportion of students completing two years and then transferring has declined to "around 5% of total enrollment" (he gives no source for this figure). This is a narrow conception of the transfer function and ignores students who successfully complete college credit instruction which can later be applied toward a degree. Cohen (1985) also implicitly treats open access at the community college as an extension of high school by labelling community college education as "grades 13 and 14" (Cohen, 1985, passim). He believes that open access has led to the provision of "quasieducative" services, and as an example, argues that offering courses to people who wish to upgrade their skills is detrimental to the image of the college as provider of "grades 13 and 14." Finally, nowhere does Cohen (1985) link open access with quality control in the classroom from which efforts an expectation of low completion rates would follow.

The Success Game: Whose Criteria?

Taxpayers and their legislative representatives are the inevitable audiences for arguments about postsecondary education success rates. The most common success criterion, on-time graduation, ignores the fact that across all higher education institutions "stopping out" of college has become more prevalent, and part-time enrollment is on the rise (Eckland & Henderson, 1981). Some authors speculate that overall graduation rates will decline as more protracted attendance patterns increase (Ramist, 1981; Eckland & Henderson, 1981; Kaufman, et al., 1984). Data reported for four universities across the country in a CUNY paper support this speculation (Kaufman, et al., 1984).

Graduation as a success criterion carries with it the clear implication that leaving college without a degree is non-success. Kaufman et al. (1984) call this the myth of college attendance--"there is no such thing as enough college without a degree." Students who "fail" to graduate are automatically tallied against college success, and institutions strive to identify correlates of retention in order to target potentially high risk groups. Insofar as these correlates reside in student characteristics, they are difficult to change short of tightening admissions policies or changing recruitment strategies (Bers, 1984). Finally, the kind of degree may also reckon in success criteria. Astin (1975) and Cohen (1985) both focus on transfer education, equating eventual baccalaureate completion with community college success.

These views have not kept pace with changed environments and diverse student goals. Declines in the blue-collar sector of the economy call for increased education in technical, business, and professional service areas. Higher education has become the gatekeeper for many of these positions, with an increased acceptance of associate degrees as viable entry points into careers (Bean & Metzner, 1985). Further, Walleri (1981) reminds us that many community college students have no intention of receiving a formal degree. The community college mission now encompasses transfer education (both with and without formal transfer degrees), vocational-technical education (both job preparatory and job upgrade which may or may not require formal degrees), special programs for non-traditional students (English as a second language, college preparatory, GED preparation, etc.), and community education.

Stopping Short of a Degree: General Research Findings

Published attrition research through the 1970s focused primarily on four year colleges (Walleri, 1981) and on conceptual/statistical models for predicting attrition (Tinto, 1975; Tinto, 1982). The majority of community college studies appear as unpublished technical reports, or as "published" entries in the ERIC collection (see the exhaustive review of non-traditional student attrition research by Bean & Metzner, 1985). Across higher education, most attrition occurs from the first to the second year. National longitudinal data reveal that 40% of first-time-in college

community college students leave after one year, as do 25% of students in four year colleges (Fetters, 1977). Up to 35% of students in four year colleges will never attain a degree (Jackley & Henderson, 1979; Ramist, 1981).

Degree intent is often not determined at community colleges. One of the most instructive lessons from the California Community Colleges longitudinal studies is that inferences about student degree intent emerged after the fact as investigators attempted to explain why so few were graduating (see for example, Hunter & Sheldon, 1981). Many of the post hoc student "prototypes" summarized in the final report describe students who had no intention of completing a degree (Sheldon, 1982; Knoell, 1982).

As was noted earlier, comparative studies find higher attrition at community colleges than at four year colleges or universities (Astin, 1975; Tinto, 1975; Beal & Noel, 1980; Anderson, 1984). These institutional differences presumably remain even when controlling for factors mitigating against community college student success. Tinto (1975) criticized Astin (1975) for applying an enormous number of variables to a small sample of students, and states that most comparative findings are tentative at best. More importantly, all of the comparative studies use university oriented success criteria and timelines, and fail to consider the several missions of community colleges which may or may not involve attaining a formal degree.

There does appear to be a general recognition that the causes and consequences of attrition differ greatly between two and four year colleges. Bean & Metzner (1985) point out that many of the factors identified as increasing the likelihood of attrition are especially prevalent in non-traditional students. They are older, commute rather than live on campus, tend to be married or employed off-campus, and attend part-time. All of these factors limit the possible intensity and duration of socialization into the academic milieu. Walleri (1981) argues that most community college withdrawals occur for valid reasons such as employment, family responsibilities, etc. Most students leave in good standing, are generally satisfied with the help they received at the institution, and many will return to postsecondary education at a later time (Lenning, et al., 1980).

The "stop-out" pattern of community college attendence is now investigated as a phenomenon in its own right (Willet, 1983).

Finally, most research indicates that increasing student involvement with an institution increases retention. Most importantly, whatever factors increase the "fit" between student and institution increase retention (Bean & Metzner, 1985, Walleri, 1981). Obviously the diversity of the community college population mitigates against a good "fit" for many students and against high student involvement. As if to underscore this point, Bers (1984) found that increased involvement did not lead to higher persistence in community college students at her institution. She surmises that the level of involvement was still too low to make this variable pertinent in a population where most students are, of necessity, minimally involved.

The Success Game Revisited: Dimensions and Definitions

On the criteria of survival and growth, the open door two year college has clearly been a success with citizens of many states. Yet these criteria will not satisfy critics who argue that community colleges do not achieve the success rates found in four year schools. The problem centers on the definition of success, an elusive concept often used for public relations purposes to market institutions and their products. Few colleges or programs can survive with the label "non-successful," and as observed by Losak (1973), operational definitions may encompass sufficiently wide ranges of behavior to virtually ensure an impressive success rate. Nickens (1976) achieved a 98% success rate for community college students when he included all who achieved their goals plus all who still had plans to do so. Only 2% had absolutely "given up." Conversely, operational definitions can be so restrictive that they ensure non-success. For community colleges, university oriented criteria such as on-time graduation (after only two years) or continuous enrollment are examples.

Three separate dimensions of success seem to emerge conceptually from the literature reviewed in the preceding sections: academic standing; persistence category; and goal attainment. Academic standing becomes salient when it is acknowledged that most students who stop short of a

degree leave in good standing (Fetters, 1977; Lenning, et at., 1980; Tinto, 1982). This is true across postsecondary education--not just in community colleges. Insofar as the community college mission encompasses college credit instruction that can be applied toward a degree, maintaining good academic standing must be included as a dimension of success.

Persistence category is another dimension emerging from the literature. Positive outcomes in addition to graduation have appeared predominantly in data from community college researchers (Kapiolani Community College, 1981; Losak, 1983; Lucas, 1983; Morris, 1983; Kaufman, et al., 1984; McMaster, 1985). Most typically, positive outcome categories encompass students who are still enrolled as well as those who have graduated, but several researchers also include students who stop short of a degree. For example, Lenning, et al. (1980) define an "attainer" as someone who completes an intended goal but leaves prior to graduation; Lucas (1983) considers students who completed 48 hours but left without a degree as having "alumni status"; and Losak (1983) counts leavers with acceptable grade point averages and thirty or more credits earned as successful.

Finally, goal attainment has long been recognized as an important mitigating variable in the literature on attrition. More than ten years ago, a Miami-Dade task force recommended that attrition be defined in relation to student expectation and attainment of stated goals (Flannery, et al., 1973). Higher education "dropout" literature in the 1980s has essentially reached the same conclusion (Bean & Metzner, 1985). For example, Tinto (1982) emphasizes that the term "dropout" should be reserved for only those students who fail to complete their goals.

The simplest specification of goals centers on whether a student is degree seeking. Many colleges are now asking for a basic declaration of intent, since placement testing, financial aid, and curricular choices are often determined by the answer. Degree seeking status can be captured at registration and does not require extensive surveys or goals inventories. There is clearly some error inherent in this self report procedure. Students desiring financial aid may declare themselves degree seeking whether or not they intend to complete the degree during a given enrollment

tenure. Conversely, students who wish to avoid placement testing and mandatory basic courses may declare themselves non-degree in order to enroll directly in specialized program courses. For the most part, however, it may be assumed that degree intent statements are accurate, but that a small margin of error will lower graduation rates of purported degree seekers and result in some graduates among students who initially declare themselves non-degree.

The three dimensions described above yield six possible outcome categories, and within these, three outcomes which will operationally define "success" for purposes of this paper:

Outcome Categories

Academic Standing	Graduated	Still Enrolled	Left College
GPA>=2.00	(1) **Success**	(2) **Success**	(3) **Success**
GPA< 2.00	(4) n/a	(5) Non-Success	(6) Non-Success

Success is limited to categories #1 through #3 since both degree and non-degree students are successful only with good grades. Limited courses for jobs or transfer must be passed in order to benefit the non-degree student, and degree seekers must remain in good academic standing if they wish to persist at the institution, graduate, return later for a degree, or transfer early. With respect to goal attainment, successful degree seeking students should be found predominantly in categories #1 and #2, and most non-degree students in category #3.

Success at Miami-Dade Community College: What the Data Reveal

Miami-Dade averages about 8,000 to 9,000 first-time-in-college students during a Fall Term, with over 80% of these self reported degree seekers. Using the 1982 Fall Term as an example, 82% of the 8,344 first-time-in-college students were degree seeking. Approximately 60% of degree seekers begin enrollment as full-time students. Of the non-degree students, however, only about 25% begin their enrollment as full-timers. A detailed breakdown of the 1982 Fall Term cohort is given in Appendix A, Table A1.

The outcome categories introduced in the previous section can be applied separately to degree and non-degree students, further categorized by whether they began enrollment on a full or part-time basis. Part-time students require a longer time span for assessment of outcomes, as do degree seekers. The community college student who most resembles the "traditional" college freshman is the full-time first-time-in-college degree seeker. Consequently the bulk of data presented will focus on these students.

Four year outcomes for the 1981 cohort of full-time first-time-in-college degree seeking students are shown in Table 1. The

Table 1
Four Year Outcomes for Students Beginning in the 1981 Fall Term as Full-Time Degree Seekers* (N=4476)

	% Graduated	% Still Enrolled	% Who Left College	% Success
GPA>=2.00	31	9	30	70
GPA< 2.00	0	3	27	

*Registered for 12 or more credits during their first term, and showed program and matriculation codes of degree seeking.

most remarkable finding is a success rate of 70%-- quite an accomplishment for an open admissions institution. The graduation rate of 31% is equalled by 30% who left in good standing without a formal degree. The reader should note that the two year graduation rate for this cohort was only 13%, which illustrates the protracted attendance patterns anticipated in the literature (Ramist, 1981; Eckland & Henderson, 1981; Kaufman, et at., 1984).

Beginning with the 1982 cohort, changes occurred which might be expected to impact success rate. College preparatory (developmental) grading practices shifted from awarding traditional A/B/C letter grades to awarding Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory/Progress grades. The "S" and "P" grades were not counted in the grade point average (GPA), but the "U" grade was. Also, the 1982 cohort was probably the first to show clear effects from curriculum requirements added to help prepare students for the new State mandated sophomore-level exit test. Passing scores on this test were

required for graduation from community colleges beginning August, 1984, approximately two years into the tenure of the 1982 cohort.

A three year success rate is available for the 1982 cohort, and can be compared to three year rates of prior groups. Table 2 presents such a comparison across six different cohorts. The three year success rates vary from 64% to 69%, again highlighting the achievement of students at Miami-Dade. The impact of added curricular requirements for the 1982 cohort

Table 2
Three Year Success Rates for Students Beginning as Full-Time Degree Seekers

Beginning Fall Term	Graduated	% Still Enrolled in Good Standing	% Who Left College in Good Standing	Total % Success
1977	25	11	27	64
1978	28	12	27	67
1979	33	11	25	69
1980	28	13	27	68
1981	28	15	26	69
1982	19	20	26	64

*Registered for 12 or more credits during their first term, and showed program and matriculation codes of degree seeking.
For more detailed data see Appendix, Table A2.

can be seen in the decrease in students who have graduated by the end of three years (to 19%) and increase in students still enrolled (to 20%). Note, however, that the total success rate is down 5 percentage points (to 64%), indicating that more students are in the GPA<2.00 category which has been defined as non-success. The final graduation rate for this cohort will probably be slightly lower than in previous years.

That the increase in students categorized as non-success is a result of changes in college preparatory grading practices is strongly supported by data from Table 3, which presents three year success rates for the 1981 and 1982 cohorts of students further subgrouped by whether they entered the college academically underprepared. Note first that Miami-Dade is achieving a success rate of well over 50% with academically underprepared

students. (For a more detailed analysis based on severity of basic skills deficiencies and amount of remediation see Losak and Morris, 1985). However there has been a drop in success rate for the academically underprepared, but not for students whose basic skills tested as adequate.

Table 3
Three Year Success Rate for Full-Time Degree Seekers*
Based on Adequacy of Entering Basic Skills

Basic Skills Category	Graduated	% Still Enrolled In Good Standing	% Who Left College In Good Standing	Total % Success
Academically Underprepared**:				
1981	25	19	23	67
1982	15	21	24	60
Basic Skills Adequate***:				
1981	41	14	23	78
1982	30	23	24	77

*Registered for 12 or more credits during their first term, and showed program and matriculation codes of degree seeking.
**Below the placement score on one or more entry level basic skills test.
***Passed all entry level basic skills tests, but below 65th percentile.
For further data see Appendix, Table A4.

While three year graduation rates have declined in general from the 1981 to the 1982 cohort, for students with adequate basic skills this is balanced by a nine percentage point increase in those still enrolled in good standing (from 14% to 23%). This is not true for the academically underprepared. On a more positive note, however, prior research at Miami-Dade has shown that academically underprepared students who successfully complete all college preparatory work in the areas where they are underprepared have the same three year success rate as students who begin with no skills deficiencies (Losak and Morris, 1985). Students who exit college preparatory courses before receiving Satisfactory grades are clearly not as competitive in the classroom, and reduce the overall success rate of the academically underprepared subgroup.

The reader may have noticed from the previous table that the success rate of students with adequate basic skills was considerably higher than that for the academically underprepared. In fact, the 64% success rate

cited for the 1982 cohort in Table 2 is actually a composite outcome from students who entered at various basic skills levels. Table 4 presents outcomes for the 1982 Fall Term cohort when entry level basic skills are taken into account.

Table 4
Three Year Success Rate for Full-Time Degree Seekers*
Based on Entry Level Testing Results

1982 Fall Term Cohort

Basic Skills Category	% Graduated	% Still Enrolled In Good Standing	% Who Left College In Good Standing	Total % Success
Not Tested	5	8	39	52
Academically Underprepared**	15	21	24	60
Basic Skills Adequate***	30	23	24	77
University Eligible****	40	18	28	86

*Registered for 12 or more credits during their first term, and showed program and matriculation codes of degree seeking.
**Below the placement score on one or more entry level basic skills test.
***Passed all entry level basic skills tests, but below 65th percentile.
****At or above the 65th percentile on all entry level basic skills tests.
For further data see Appendix, Table A6.

The most impressive success rate in Table 4 is for students scoring high enough on the placement tests to be considered university eligible. The three year graduation rate is 40%, which compares to five year graduation rates of 30% for the CUNY universities, 29% for the California State University and College System, and 32% for Arizona State university (Kaufman, et al., 1984). These rates are evidence that academically talented students are not "at risk" by beginning postsecondary education at Miami-Dade. They are also evidence for protracted attendance patterns in universities as well as community college.

Not surprisingly, there is a systematic increase in success rate as basic skills levels increase. The students who were full-time degree seeking yet not tested show the lowest success rate, with most of these leaving the college in good standing. This group was almost 80% Hispanic, and over 60% showed graduation from foreign high schools (see Appendix,

Table A6). It would appear that these are non-English speakers who were initially exempt from basic skills testing and left once the English language was mastered (i.e. once they received good grades in their ESL coursework).

The analysis so far has focused on full-time first-time-in-college degree seeking students. The part-time degree seeker, on the other hand, represents a different kind of student. At Miami-Dade, the actual number of part-time first-time-in-college degree seekers for a given Fall Term is slightly over 2,500. These students are generally older than full-timers, less likely to have graduated from Florida high schools, and more likely to test as academically underprepared at entry (see Appendix, Tables A2 and A3). Further, these students are likely to be attending part-time because they are married and/or working. Given these differences, we might expect a lower success rate for part-time degree seekers, and certainly would expect a lower graduation rate.

Table 5 presents a comparison of four year success rates for full vs. part-time degree seekers. Note that the success rate for part-time degree seekers is slightly over 50%. This is an impressive showing for students who have been out of high school longer than their full-time counterparts, and who are likely to have work and/or family responsibilities competing for their available study time. The part-time graduation rate of 11% compares favorably with a three year rate of 7% at William Rainey Harper College (Lucas, 1983) and 1% at Mercer Community College (McMaster, 1985).

Table 5
Four Year Success Rates for Full-Time* vs. Part-Time**
First-Time-in-College Degree Seeking*** Students

1981 Fall Term Cohort

Enrollment Category	% Graduated	% Still Enrolled In Good Standing	% Who Left College in Good Standing	Total % Success
Full-Time	31	9	30	70
Part-Time	11	11	33	54

*Registered for 12 or more credits during their first term.
**Registered for less than 12 credits during their first term.
***Showed program and matriculation codes of degree seeking during their first term. For further data see Appendix, Tables A3 and A5.

A final component of first-time-in-college enrollment that deserves mention is the non-degree student. At Miami-Dade, close to 20% of all first-time-in-college students in a given Fall Term declare themselves non-degree (Approximately 1,500 students), with the majority enrolling on a part-time basis. These part-time non-degree students enroll with limited objectives relating to work or personal interest. They are the oldest of the first-time-in-college students (mean age of 33), least likely to have graduated from Florida high schools (only 33%), and most likely to be female (65%). Their four year success rate is 50%, and compares favorably with that of their part-time degree seeking counterparts (see Appendix, Tables A4 and A5 for complete data on non-degree students).

The part-time degree seeker and the non-degree student described above are examples of an adult population entering college for the first time. Almost ten years ago, Lenning & Hanson (1977) speculated that community colleges had just begun to "scratch the surface" of the total adult population desiring postsecondary education. Colleges were then enrolling adults with traditional academic backgrounds in high school who were not representative of the "millions out there" paralleling the low income academically underprepared student in the younger age groups. It is clear that, at least at Miami-Dade, more of the "non-traditional" adults are now entering the system.

The data presented above give a picture of success at Miami-Dade which includes students who earn college credit but stop short of a degree. For degree seekers, one wonders if those who stop short will eventually return to postsecondary education as the literature suggests. For Miami-Dade students who began in the Fall Term of 1981 as full-time degree seekers yet left in good standing before earning a degree, 14% who were located had enrolled in the State University system one year after they left Miami-Dade (see Appendix, Table A7). For students whose entering basic skills were adequate, 27% of leavers who were located had enrolled in the State University system one year later. For those talented students who were university eligible at entrance to M-DCC, 34% of leavers who were located had enrolled in the State University system one year after leaving the college. These percentages would be higher if enrollment in the

University System were tracked longer than one year after leaving Miami-Dade. A project currently underway by Institutional Research is designed to accomplish such tracking.

Success at Miami-Dade: Comparison With Other Colleges

A literature search for longitudinal data to compare with Miami-Dade outcomes revealed few data bases using adequate time spans. For example, of the 40 studies reviewed by Bean & Metzner (1985), 75% focused on a time span for attrition of one year or less. Additionally, many studies do not distinguish between degree seeking and non-degree students, between full-timers and part-timers, or between first-time-in-college students and those who are simply new to a particular college. If these distinctions are not made, differences between colleges may simply reflect initial enrollment components rather than differential success of the academic program. Additionally, the present study has demonstrated that outcomes differ for students whose entering high basic skills levels differ.

With these qualifications in mind, data were located from only three community colleges to compare with Miami-Dade outcomes. The comparison is based on the number of students who graduated or were still enrolled (irrespective of GPA) and is presented in Table 6. Note that

Table 6
Three Year Comparative Outcomes
For **Degree Seeking** New* Students Attending on a **Full-Time** Basis

College	% Graduated	% Still Enrolled	Total
Miami-Dade Community College	19	27	46
Mercer Community College, NJ (McMaster, 1985)	17	25	42
CUNY Community Colleges, NY (Kaufman, et al., 1984)	15	24	39
Kapiolani Community College, HI (Kapiolani, 1981)	17	21	38

*Kapiolani students were simply new to the college and not necessarily first-time-in-college.

Miami-Dade outcomes compare well with those from the other colleges. It is still not clear whether outcome differences among schools reflect the differential success of academic programs, or differences among students. It was not possible to determine the exact basic skills mix at the comparison schools, yet it was clear that they all had students who began with skills below college level. These three schools also had minority representation in their student body, and presumably ESL students.

Summary and Implications

Females, minorities, and older students with jobs and families are entering higher education at an increasing rate. The stereotypical image of an undergraduate student as 19 years old, academically able, white, middle class, and male must change to a recognition that higher education now embraces a more representative cross-section of the public. Community colleges have historically taken the lead in education of these "non-traditional" students, but their impact is now being felt in four year colleges and universities as well.

The influx of these students into higher education has led to quite different student enrollment patterns. Stopping out of college is more prevalent, part-time enrollment is increasing, and most students have objectives that are not synonymous with earning a baccalaureate degree within four years. College credit work may be spaced over a number of years, over several institutions, and if a degree is earned, it may not be a baccalaureate. Associate degrees are increasingly accepted as credentials for entry into technical and business careers, and college credit short of a degree can help upgrade job skills. These factors suggest a need to redefine student "success", a task which the authors of the present paper have undertaken.

The success criteria developed consider student goals, possible outcomes, and academic standing as measured by grade point average. Six categories emerge, with three of these defined as "success": graduating; remaining enrolled in good academic standing; and leaving college in good

standing. Using these criteria, the Miami-Dade student success rate for full-time first-time-in-college degree seekers is 70% after four years. The components of this success rate are: 31% graduated; 9% still enrolled in good standing; and 30% left college in good standing. The two year graduation rate for this same group is only 13%, emphasizing the need to consider protracted attendance patterns when examining graduation as a component of success.

A further grouping of student outcomes based on entry-level basic skills reveals that academically talented students are not necessarily "at risk" by beginning enrollment at a community college. For those students defined as university eligible, three year success rates were 86%, which includes a 40% graduation rate. This compares favorably with graduation rates quoted for universities (approximately 30% graduated after five years).

A limited follow-up of full-time degree seekers who left in good standing revealed that 14% of those located had enrolled in the State university system within one year after leaving Miami-Dade. For students classified as university eligible at entry to Miami-Dade, 34% of leavers located had enrolled in the State university system within one year. This finding reinforces the picture of students who space out their educational experiences across time and across institutions.

Successful student outcomes are essential for a college to survive. A variety of measures may be used in any analysis and the literature is replete with a wide array which have been selected over the decades. Measures used in this study were few, selected so as to avoid self-serving definitions on the one hand, or inherently devastating measures on the other. The authors believe that those selected represent an optimal synthesis rooted in institutional mission and reality-based student behavior.

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Appendix

Methodology Note

Data on Miami-Dade first-time-in-college students were generated from a longitudinal master file that identifies these students during their initial Fall Term enrollment and then follows their enrollment for the next six years. Historical cohorts exit from the 1976 Fall Term forward. Data were analyzed using SAS programs written specifically for this study. Both program and matriculation codes were used to define whether a student was degree seeking, which prevented analysis of the 1976 Fall Term cohort whose matriculation codes were not available.

Full and part-time status were determined on the basis of credits registered during the first term. Students with 12 or more credits registered were counted as full-time. Additionally, credits earned during the first term were examined to identify transfer students who might have been mistakenly coded as first-time-in-college. If first term credits earned exceeded 20 for full-timers of 12 for part-timers, then a coding error was presumed and the student was dropped from the study.

Outcomes were coded so as to assign each student only one unique status at any point in time. Graduation data for a given year were captured for the two major terms as well as and the shorter Spring/Summer Terms. Re-enrollment, however, was only looked for in major terms. Thus for a student to count as still enrolled at the end of the first cohort year, she/he had to show enrollment during the second major term for that year (Winter), but not for the shorter Spring/Summer Terms. If the student graduated during the short Spring/Summer Terms for that year, however, the graduation was counted for that year and the student categorization changed from "still enrolled" to "graduated".

Follow-up data on cohort leavers were obtained by matching the longitudinal cohort data for the 1981 cohort against placement and follow-up files available in Institutional Research. Students were considered as "found" on follow-up if they were on the placement and follow-up files and

had either employment or university information. Under these criteria, 53% of the 1981 cohort leavers were found. Of those students found on the follow-up file, examination of State University System enrollment was only for the next Fall Term after the student had been absent from Miami-Dade one year.

Table A1

First-Time-in-College Cohort Overview for the 1982 Fall Term

Three Year Outcomes

Total Cohort N=8344

	Number	Percent
Graduated[*]	994	12
Still Enrolled GPA>=2.00	1385	17
Left with GPA>=2.00	2476	30
Total	4855	58

DEGREE SEEKING Students N=6850 (82%)

	Number	Percent
Graduated	947	14
Still Enrolled GPA>=2.00	1272	19
Left with GPA>=2.00	1839	27
Total	4058	59

NON-DEGREE Students N=1494 (18%)

	Number	Percent
Graduated	47	3
Still Enrolled GPA>=2.00	113	8
Left with GPA>=2.00	637	43
Total	797	53

FULL-TIME[**] Degree Seeking N=4179 (50%)

	Number	Percent
Graduated	789	19
Still Enrolled GPA>=2.00	829	20
Left with GPA>=2.00	1074	26
Total	2692	64

--- **TOTAL FULL-TIME**[**] N=4474 ---

	Number	Percent
Graduated	809	18
Still Enrolled GPA>=2.00	858	19
Left with GPA>=2.00	1173	26
Total	2840	63

FULL-TIME[**] Non-Degree N=295 (4%)

	Number	Percent
Graduated	20	7
Still Enrolled GPA>=2.00	29	10
Left with GPA>=2.00	99	34
Total	148	51

PART-TIME Degree Seeking N=2671 (32%)

	Number	Percent
Graduated	158	6
Still Enrolled GPA>=2.00	443	17
Left with GPA>=2.00	765	29
Total	1366	51

--- **TOTAL PART-TIME** N=3870 ---

	Number	Percent
Graduated	185	5
Still Enrolled GPA>=2.00	527	14
Left with GPA>=2.00	1303	34
Total	2015	52

PART-TIME Non-Degree N=1199 (14%)

	Number	Percent
Graduated	27	2
Still Enrolled GPA>=2.00	84	7
Left with GPA>=2.00	538	45
Total	649	54

[*]Through Summer 1985

[**]Based on 12 or more credits enrolled during the first term.

Table A2

Full-Time* Degree Seeking Students

Summary of Demographics and Outcomes for
First-Time-in-College Cohorts
Across Selected Fall Terms

N=	1977 (4658)	1978 (4364)	1979 (4448)	1980 (5214)	1981 (4476)	1982 (4179)	1983 (4133)	1984 (3951)	1985 (3789)
Mean Age	20	20	19	20	20	20	20	20	20
% Declaring A.A. Degree	78	72	75	79	80	79	78	80	81
% Who Graduated From:									
Florida High Schools	74	73	72	65	68	71	70	71	71
Foreign High Schools	8	4	12	22	19	17	17	16	16
% Hispanic	37	40	46	58	59	57	57	56	57
% Black	24	20	17	15	13	15	16	18	17
%Female	53	53	54	53	54	53	53	54	53
% Male	47	47	46	47	46	47	47	46	47
Mean Credits Earned After 3 Major Terms**	28.4	28.9	29.8	29.1	29.3	28.1	28.1	25.1	
% of Cohort Tested on Basic Skills				80	87	88	83	72***	
% Below on One or More Subtest				51	56	57	56	45	
% at or Above 65th Percentile				9	9	9	8	7	
Two Year Outcomes (%):									
(1) Graduated	13	15	15	15	13	9	8		
(2) Still Enrolled with GPA>=2.00	31	32	35	33	36	37	39		
3) Left with GPA>=2.00	19	18	19	19	19	16	16		
Persistence Rate (1+2)	44	47	50	48	49	46	47		
Success Rate (1+2+3)	63	66	69	67	68	62	63		
Three Year Outcomes (%):									
(1) Graduated	25	28	33	28	28	19			
(2) Still Enrolled with GPA>=2.00	11	12	11	13	15	20			
(3) Left with GPA>=2.00	27	27	25	27	26	26			
Persistence Rate (1+2)	36	40	44	41	43	39			
Success Rate (1+2+3)	64	67	69	68	69	64			
Four Year Outcomes (%):									
(1) Graduated	30	33	37	33	31				
(2) Still Enrolled with GPA>=2.00	5	5	6	6	9				
(3) Left with GPA>=2.00	30	29	28	30	30				
Persistence Rate (1+2)	35	38	42	40	40				
Success Rate (1+2+3)	64	67	70	69	70				

*Registered for 12 or more credits during their first term.
**Excludes students who earned zero credits- approximately 8-9% of each cohort.
***Excludes students who were tested on the ASSET battery.

Table A3

Part-Time* Degree Seeking Students

Summary of Demographics and Outcomes for
First-Time-in-College Cohorts
Across Selected Fall Terms

N=	1977 (3024)	1978 (2796)	1979 (2828)	1980 (3217)	1981 (2813)	1982 (2671)	1983 (2755)	1984 (2726)	1985 (2663)
Mean Age	23	22	22	24	23	22	22	22	22
% Declaring A.A. Degree	70	66	63	75	69	67	69	71	73
% Who Graduated From:									
Florida High Schools	70	70	65	55	63	65	63	67	68
Foreign High Schools	5	3	10	26	13	12	11	10	11
% Hispanic	40	44	45	59	53	53	55	55	56
% Black	22	17	19	13	18	17	17	17	14
%Female	60	59	59	54	57	57	56	57	55
% Male	40	41	41	46	43	43	44	43	45
Mean Credits Earned After 3 Major Terms**	14.9	15.6	16.0	16.2	16.3	16.0	15.5	12.9	
% of Cohort Tested on Basic Skills				69	84	87	88	79	
% Below on One or More Subtest			--	49	63	65	66	57	
% at or Above 65th Percentile				5	5	6	5	5	
Two Year Outcomes (%):									
(1) Graduated	2	2	3	3	2	2	2		
(2) Still Enrolled with GPA>=2.00	24	26	25	25	27	25	25		
3) Left with GPA>=2.00	25	25	25	26	24	22	20		
Persistence Rate (1+2)	26	28	28	27	29	27	26		
Success Rate (1+2+3)	51	53	53	54	54	49	46		
Three Year Outcomes (%):									
(1) Graduated	6	8	9	8	8	6			
(2) Still Enrolled with GPA>=2.00	15	15	14	15	16	17			
(3) Left with GPA>=2.00	30	31	31	32	30	29			
Persistence Rate (1+2)	21	23	23	23	24	23			
Success Rate (1+2+3)	51	54	54	55	54	51			
Four Year Outcomes (%):									
(1) Graduated	10	13	12	12	11				
(2) Still Enrolled with GPA>=2.00	8	8	9	8	11				
(3) Left with GPA>=2.00	33	34	34	36	33				
Persistence Rate (1+2)	19	21	21	20	21				
Success Rate (1+2+3)	52	55	55	56	54				

*Registered for fewer than 12 credits during their first term.
**Excludes students who earned zero credits- approximately 8-9% of each cohort.

Table A4

Full-Time* Non-Degree Students

Summary of Demographics and Outcomes for
First-Time-in-College Cohorts
Across Selected Fall Terms

N=	1977 (643)	1978 (815)	1979 (654)	1980 (432)	1981 (463)	1982 (295)	1983 (144)	1984 (163)	1985 (191)
Mean Age	22	27	28	22	25	25	26	26	29
% Declaring A.A. Degree									
% Who Graduated From:									
Florida High Schools	69	57	47	52	32	38	43	47	33
Foreign High Schools	9	18	35	31	46	38	43	38	44
% Hispanic	33	44	48	45	60	54	59	54	68
% Black	24	19	15	18	16	12	15	11	8
%Female	54	58	54	46	47	47	49	55	52
% Male	46	42	46	54	53	53	51	45	48
Mean Credits Earned After 3 Major Terms**	25.5	24.5	23.6	22.6	21.8	20.8	20.9	18.3	
% of Cohort Tested on Basic Skills				67	54	52	54	37	
% Below on One or More Subtest				46	42	38	38	21	
% at or Above 65th Percentile				6	5	5	7	6	
Two Year Outcomes (%):									
(1) Graduated	11	11	11	4	3	2	3		
(2) Still Enrolled with GPA>=2.00	26	22	15	17	26	21	17		
3) Left with GPA>=2.00	23	32	40	34	35	26	34		
Persistence Rate (1+2)	37	33	26	21	29	23	20		
Success Rate (1+2+3)	60	65	66	55	64	49	54		
Three Year Outcomes (%):									
(1) Graduated	23	18	17	10	10	7			
(2) Still Enrolled with GPA>=2.00	9	5	3	6	13	10			
(3) Left with GPA>=2.00	30	42	45	40	42	34			
Persistence Rate (1+2)	32	23	20	16	23	17			
Success Rate (1+2+3)	62	65	65	56	65	51			
Four Year Outcomes (%):									
(1) Graduated	26	20	18	12	11				
(2) Still Enrolled with GPA>=2.00	2	1	1	4	10				
(3) Left with GPA>=2.00	35	45	46	41	46				
Persistence Rate (1+2)	28	21	19	16	21				
Success Rate (1+2+3)	63	66	65	57	67				

*Registered for 12 or more credits during their first term.
**Includes students who earned zero credits- approximately 8-9% of each cohort

Table A5

Part-Time* Non-Degree Students

Summary of Demographics and Outcomes for
First-Time-in-College Cohorts
Across Selected Fall Terms

N=	1977 (1969)	1978 (1883)	1979 (2364)	1980 (2413)	1981 (1408)	1982 (1199)	1983 (1016)	1984 (1037)	1985 (975)
Mean Age	37	38	36	32	31	32	33	33	34
% Declaring A.A. Degree									
% Who Graduated From:									
Florida High Schools	32	29	27	29	33	29	34	35	33
Foreign High Schools	34	36	42	37	29	37	32	24	26
% Hispanic	35	34	30	28	32	33	41	37	36
% Black	18	16	18	37	27	15	14	13	15
%Female	66	65	72	57	62	69	66	65	64
% Male	34	35	28	43	38	31	34	35	36
Mean Credits Earned After 3 Major Terms**	9.2	9.4	7.7	7.8	8.0	7.2	6.3	5.0	
% of Cohort Tested on Basic Skills				21	33	28	25	19	
% Below on One or More Subtest				17	26	21	18	14	
% at or Above 65th Percentile				2	2	2	3	2	
Two Year Outcomes (%):									
(1) Graduated	1	1	0	2	1	2	2		
(2) Still Enrolled with GPA>=2.00	15	17	8	8	9	12	9		
3) Left with GPA>=2.00	53	49	47	44	39	40	43		
Persistence Rate (1+2)	16	18	8	10	10	14	11		
Success Rate (1+2+3)	70	67	55	54	49	54	54		
Three Year Outcomes (%):									
(1) Graduated	2	2	1	2	1	2			
(2) Still Enrolled with GPA>=2.00	11	4	4	5	6	7			
(3) Left with GPA>=2.00	57	61	49	47	42	45			
Persistence Rate (1+2)	12	6	6	7	7	9			
Success Rate (1+2+3)	70	67	55	54	49	54			
Four Year Outcomes (%):									
(1) Graduated	2	3	2	3	2				
(2) Still Enrolled with GPA>=2.00	2	2	2	4	5				
(3) Left with GPA>=2.00	65	62	51	47	43				
Persistence Rate (1+2)	4	5	4	7	7				
Success Rate (1+2+3)	70	67	55	54	50				

*Registered for fewer than 12 credits during their first term.
**Excludes students who earned zero credits- approximately 8-9% of each cohort.

Table A6

Three Year Outcomes for Fall Term Cohorts
With Students Grouped on the Basis of Entry Level Testing Results

1981 and 1982 Fall Term Cohorts

First-Time-in-College Degree Seeking Students

	Not Tested on Basic Skills		Academically Underprepared*		Basic Skills Adequate**		University Eligible***	
	1981	1982	1981	1982	1981	1982	1981	1982
FULL-TIME DEGREE SEEKING N=	581	507	2498	2387	984	914	413	371
Mean Age	29	27	19	19	18	18	18	18
% Declaring A.A. Degree	77	77	77	76	85	85	91	90
% Who Graduated From:								
Florida High Schools	11	17	71	72	87	87	90	90
Foreign High Schools	76	63	14	14	3	4	1	2
% Hispanic	83	78	58	56	53	53	45	42
% Black	8	7	19	21	7	8	2	3
% Female	53	54	55	55	53	49	56	54
% Male	47	46	45	45	47	51	44	46
(1) % Graduated	4	5	25	15	41	30	49	40
(2) % Still Enrolled with GPA>=2.00	5	8	19	21	14	23	11	18
(3) % Who Left with GPA>=2.00	45	39	23	24	23	24	26	28
Persistence Rate (1+2)	9	13	44	36	55	53	60	58
Success Rate (1+2+3)	54	52	67	60	78	77	86	86
PART-TIME DEGREE SEEKING N=	446	349	1777	1729	442	444	148	149
Mean Age	31	30	22	21	20	20	21	22
% Declaring A.A. Degree	65	67	67	65	77	75	78	76
% Who Graduated From:								
Florida High Schools	30	32	67	69	77	73	70	69
Foreign High Schools	41	43	9	8	3	4	4	4
% Hispanic	55	57	54	54	50	46	41	39
% Black	19	12	23	20	4	9	3	5
% Female	62	59	56	56	57	60	55	66
% Male	38	41	44	44	43	40	45	34
(1) % Graduated	1	2	8	4	14	14	14	17
(2) % Still Enrolled with GPA>=2.00	4	5	16	17	21	23	22	22
(3) % Who Left with GPA>=2.00	38	38	28	26	30	29	41	41
Persistence Rate (1+2)	5	7	24	21	35	37	36	39
Success Rate (1+2+3)	43	45	52	47	65	66	77	80

*Below the placement score on one or more entry level basic skills test.
**Passed all entry level basic skills tests, but below 65th percentile.
***At or above the 65th percentile on all entry level basic skills tests.

Table A7

Comparison of Students Who Showed Three Year Outcomes
of Graduating vs. Leaving-in-Good-Standing (GPA>=2.00)

1981 and 1982 Fall Term Cohorts

Full-Time* First-Time-in-College Degree Seeking Students

	Not Tested on Basic Skills (N=581)		Academically Underprepared** (N=2498)		Basic Skills Adequate*** (N=984)		University Eligible**** (N=413)		Total (N=4476)	
	Grads	Leavers	Grads	Leavers	Grads	Leavers	Grads	Leavers	Grads	Leavers
N=	21	262	615	574	403	222	203	107	1242	1165
%	4	45	25	23	41	23	49	26	28	26
% Declaring A.A. Degree	90	76	83	77	86	87	93	92	86	79
% Hispanic	57	82	58	59	60	42	49	35	57	59
% Black	5	8	15	16	7	6	2	3	10	11
% Female	38	59	58	52	61	50	64	51	60	53
% Male	62	41	42	48	39	50	32	49	40	47
Age Ranges:										
% 15-24 y/o	95	35	96	89	98	96	99	96	97	79
% 25-44 y/o	5	56	3	10	2	3	0	2	3	19
% 45 and +	0	9	1	1	0	1	1	2	0	2
Credits Earned Ranges:										
% 0-24 Credits	0	74	0	42	0	32	0	27	0	46
% 25-39 Credits	0	16	0	31	0	34	0	40	0	30
% 40-90 Credits	81	8	97	27	99	25	98	33	97	24
% 91 and + Credits	9	0	3	0	1	9	2	0	3	0
% Located on Follow-Up Tapes	48	50	58	48	81	60	81	69	69	53
of these:										
% in State Univ. System	60	2	57	7	69	27	72	34	64	14
% Working	40	98	43	93	31	73	28	66	36	86

*Registered for 12 or more credits during their first term.
**Below the placement score on one or more entry level basic skills tests.
***Passed all entry level basic skills tests, but below the 65th percentile.
****At or above the 65th percentile on all entry level basic skills tests.

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